



# Garrick Snider — The Zen of Water

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Avid swimmer Garrick Snider glides through water effortlessly, moving his head from side to side as strong arms and legs propel him through the open water, its ebbs and flows sometimes helping him, sometimes hindering him. In the distance, he spots a sandy shore and starts to make his way toward it.

Many people would be uncomfortable miles from land, floating in a body of water that can be cold and unpredictable. Since he was a child, Snider, who works in the finance division at the Laboratory, has embraced water, at first spending his summers at local pools and later taking to the sport of swimming.

“Swimming is my Zen,” he says. “I guess it’s the calming effects of water that call to me. I remember going to the pool every summer when I was growing up, and I would be there from eight in the morning until it got dark.”

Snider participated as a member of the Los Alamos High School Swim Team, earning a scholarship in diving to attend New Mexico State University. After college he discovered the sport of open-water swimming, which takes place not in the confines of pools but in vast outdoor bodies of water, such as lakes, rivers, bays and ocean.

## Escaping Alcatraz

On June 12, 1962, the Anglin brothers and Frank Lee Morris made their infamous escape attempt from the Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary, and while the fate of these men remains unknown, many believe they successfully completed the swim in unforgivingly ice-cold water.

Inspired by this great escape, an annual Sharkfest Alcatraz swim from the island to San Francisco has taken place since 1992. This sold-out event attracts swimmers from around the world, including Snider and his training partner Laverne Johnson (whose husband works at the Laboratory). This open-water swim is far from easy—the sponsor recommends that at a minimum a participant must have the ability to swim 2.5 miles in a pool without rest before even considering it.

Snider had participated in the Alcatraz swim about 15 years ago and only recently started up again.

“The hardest part of an open-water swim is navigation. There are no lines to follow like there are at the bottom of a pool,” he says. “The current can take you off course, there are few markers other than buoys up top and water conditions are unpredictable. You must keep your head up, and always know where the next marker is, so that you can adjust accordingly and make it to shore.”

“This year, Laverne and I participated in swims at Lake Tahoe in August and San Diego in October,” says Snider. “We’re just getting started.”

One of the hardest things about open-water swimming is getting bored. “The scenery doesn’t change much, it’s just an ocean of blue,” he says with a chuckle. “You feel as though you are not making any progress. It’s times like these where you have to work to retain focus and keep swimming.”

Snider was also a member of the New Mexico Masters Swimming, part of the United States Masters Swimming organization. “Water is part of who I am, so it was only natural that I would become a member of this organization,” Garrick says. “I encourage anyone to get into the water. Let it become a part of you.”

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